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Chair: Mr. Denis Zdorov (Vice-Chair) ..... (Belarus)

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In the absence of Mr. Momen (Bangladesh), Mr. Zdorov (Belarus), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 25: Agriculture development and food security (*continued*) (A/66/76-E/2011/102 and A/66/277)

1. **Mr. Radian** (Israel) said that climate change, drought and desertification and other challenges underscored the need to replace traditional farming methods with sustainable agricultural systems. Israel, a small country in an arid zone, had to develop sustainable agricultural methods in order to conserve and maintain its resources. In just over 60 years it had transformed a competitive disadvantage into an asset to become a world leader in agricultural innovation and technology. It had continued to develop cutting-edge technologies in both the water and renewable energy sectors, and had introduced sophisticated systems for drip irrigation, seawater desalination and water reclamation. Its appreciation of the need for energy independence had likewise stimulated groundbreaking advances in the fields of photovoltaic technology and geothermal energy.

2. Having undergone rapid and successful agricultural development Israel was eager to play a prominent role in international efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger around the world. Because urban-dwellers now comprised half of the world's population and depended on the rural population for sustenance, his Government's agricultural assistance programming abroad focused on promoting sustainability of agricultural production in rural areas of the developing world.

3. In partnership with Ghana and Germany, Israel was working to raise the efficiency of Ghanaian citrus farmers by combining agricultural assistance with capacity-building and elements of microfinancing and microcredit. Another successful project, the Techno-agricultural Innovation for Poverty Alleviation (TIPA) programme which relied on low-cost drip irrigation techniques that allowed farmers to produce crops throughout the year, had been introduced in a number of African countries. Initiatives such as TIPA highlighted the importance of sharing agricultural technology to promote sustainable development; the programme would be the focus of the resolution on agricultural technology for development his delegation would be submitting shortly to the Committee.

4. However, it was not enough to assist developing countries to acquire new technologies; they must develop their own capabilities for innovation. Accordingly, the focus should be on capacity-building, education and transfer of skills.

5. To that end, his Government was currently co-hosting a High-Level Expert Group Meeting on "using green agriculture to stimulate economic growth and eradicate poverty" in preparation for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012. It remained committed to the principle of sharing its experience and know-how with others in order to identify the most efficient approaches to ensuring food security and developing sustainable agriculture.

6. **Ms. Chartres** (Australia) said that the drought in the Horn of Africa and the flooding in South-east Asia and Pakistan were reminders of the tragic toll extreme weather events and climate change could exact on people's lives. Meanwhile, the surge in some commodity food prices might well result in another global food crisis. Feeding the world's population of 9 billion by 2050 would require an estimated 70 per cent increase in global food production. According to a World Bank report agricultural production was four times more effective than other sectors at reducing poverty, making the rationale for increased investments in agriculture clear.

7. Addressing the obstacles — such as poor market infrastructure and unfair competition — that stood in the way of progress for many developing countries would increase the opportunities for developing country farmers to raise food output.

8. An open trading system, undistorted by artificial subsidies and market barriers, would allow farmers to make the best decisions about how to invest and to specialize in those products in which they had a competitive advantage. It would also allow countries with inadequate agricultural resources but other comparative advantages to realize the goal of food security through trade.

9. Australia advocated a comprehensive approach to the issue of global food security, including through emergency assistance and social protection for the most vulnerable, aid for agriculture and rural development, public and private investments in

agricultural research and development, investment in climate change mitigation and appropriate economic and trade policies at the global, regional and national levels.

10. Her country's aid programme, which would double in size by 2015, included a strong and growing focus on agriculture and food security, with extensive funding dedicated to the World Food Programme (WFP), the Global Food Crisis Response Programme (GFRP), the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

11. The impact of that development assistance had been dramatic, with increased crop yields in countries such as Timor-Leste, Afghanistan and the Solomon Islands. Australia had joined with other Group of 20 (G-20) Ministers of Agriculture, to adopt the Action Plan on Price Volatility and Agriculture and establish a new Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS). It was committed to sharing its expertise with others in order to improve the agricultural sector's resilience to droughts and floods, as well as to upgrade water management practices and introduce conservation-oriented farming methods.

12. **Ms. Wacharaprapapong** (Thailand) said that while the agricultural sector employed 40 per cent of Thailand's population, farmers comprised the majority of the country's rural poor. As a result agricultural development was crucial not only to the goal of enhancing food security and raising agricultural productivity but also to that of reducing poverty.

13. Her Government believed that the issue of agricultural development should be addressed in a holistic manner by promoting productive investments in agriculture that respected the lives and livelihoods of local communities and yielded mutual benefits for investors and local populations alike. Improving agricultural productivity would require intensified research and development efforts that remained mindful of biodiversity and its contribution to sustainable agricultural practices.

14. In that regard the transfer of technology to developing countries was fundamental to agricultural development and to the mitigation of and adaptation to the impacts of climate change. Improvements in food processing technologies that provided small farmers with added value and linked them to the global value chain were equally vital.

15. Food security should be addressed from the perspectives of both supply and demand, with a free, fair and open international market serving as the necessary precondition for guaranteed food accessibility. Her country looked forward to the early conclusion of the Doha Round in order to ensure a fair agricultural market and it called for international solidarity on the issue.

16. Climate change presented a real threat to food security. The worst flooding the country had experienced in decades was currently impacting crucial sectors of the economy, including the agricultural sector. While it was important to focus on the immediate problems, his Government recognized the need for long-term solutions, including the development of improved water management and irrigation systems and the establishment of an early warning mechanism to enable it to better predict and prepare for natural disasters.

17. The global nature of the food security challenge called for a well-coordinated response at the subregional, regional and international levels. Her Government expressed its appreciation to the United Nations system in general and to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in particular for championing agricultural development and food security. It looked forward to working with other Member States to promote agricultural development and food security.

18. **Mr. De Klerk** (Netherlands) said that the ongoing situation in the Horn of Africa had been a stark reminder that, despite greater prosperity for a large number of people, hunger had not been eradicated. By 2050 there would be 9 billion people to feed, requiring a 70 per cent increase in food production while the availability of arable land would increase by only 15 per cent.

19. Food security was not merely a question of increasing production but also of ensuring that people had the necessary resources to purchase enough food of adequate quality. With a growing number of people in the developing world living in cities it was vital that adequate markets and infrastructures be developed to link production with consumption.

20. On the production side, the private sector had to play a central role, with the emphasis on improving business environments in rural areas, promoting entrepreneurship and creating jobs. Farmers were

entrepreneurs; and, as such, they needed access to financial services, training and advice. Towards that end, his Government would invest 200 million euros in the GAFSP, the Dutch development bank FMO, the cooperative bank Rabobank and others.

21. In many countries food security was hampered by poor infrastructure, with up to 30 per cent of crops in Africa being lost post-harvest. To ameliorate the situation initiatives such as the Trademark East Africa had been established to promote cross-border trade. Food security was a central component of his Government's development policies; as the world's second-largest exporter of agricultural products, the Netherlands could provide a valuable perspective on the challenges of food security and on potential solutions.

22. **Mr. Dingha** (Democratic Republic of Congo) said that the situation in the Horn of Africa and, most notably, the tragedy unfolding in Somalia, underscored the need to integrate the issues of agricultural development and food security into sustainable development efforts.

23. His delegation welcomed the measures taken to increase financing of agriculture and food security, such as the establishment of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and the launch of the GAFSP, noting that 12 countries had so far benefited from subsidies totaling $520.2 million.

24. His Government had made agriculture a national priority; it believed that — as noted, inter alia, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — everyone had the right to adequate food and that the gravity of the ongoing crisis necessitated greater international coordination of initiatives at all levels.

25. Having at its disposal arable land, a favourable climate and abundant water resources his Government had taken measures aimed at achieving food security in accordance with the commitments made at the African Union Summit in Maputo. Among them was an experimental project to reverse rural flight by establishing agricultural villages and creating an agro-industrial network with the aim of fostering food independence. It had launched an initiative to mechanize agriculture and refurbish rural roads as a means of facilitating access to markets and increase the incomes of rural populations. It had also promoted livestock rearing in certain regions and put in place a satellite monitoring system to assist fishing vessels to increase their catches. It was seeking, above all, to deal with the structural causes of the food crisis, notably the inadequate investment in rural development.

26. **Ms. Anderson** (Ireland), noting that some 12 million people were suffering from acute hunger in the Horn of Africa, said that her country had responded with immediate relief and direct assistance. However, short-term relief must be part of a longer-term strategy focused on sustainable agriculture and food security.

27. As a result of the 2008 Hunger Task Force report, her Government was now focusing on boosting the productivity of agricultural smallholders in sub-Saharan Africa, especially of women, targeting malnutrition in infants, children and mothers and promoting governance and leadership to reduce global hunger at both the national and international levels. The Task Force had also recommended that 20 per cent of the national aid budget be allocated to hunger-related activities by 2012. That goal would soon be achieved.

28. Smallholder farmers, especially women, must be at the heart of any sustainable solution to global hunger. Support would be most effective if the entire food production cycle was considered as part of the value chain process. Support for agricultural research and improved access to credit and farm inputs should be central features of any aid programme. Likewise smallholder farmers should have links with the private sector.

29. At the same time stressing that increased production did not necessarily translate into improved nutritional outcomes, she said that quality as much as quantity should be the relevant measure. Comprehensive initiatives such as the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement had real potential to reduce malnutrition.

30. The recent High-Level Meeting on Nutrition had taken stock of the substantial progress the SUN movement had made in the year since it was launched. Ireland had been a leading donor convenor for the SUN movement in Tanzania and Malawi and was supporting SUN processes in Ethiopia, Zambia and Uganda and it encouraged all stakeholders to ensure that nutrition security was universally applied.

31. **Mr. Bame** (Ethiopia), noting that at no time in history had so many people faced the prospect of food insecurity, said that Ethiopia had suffered for decades from cyclical droughts and food insecurity.

32. Since agriculture was the mainstay of 85 per cent of the population, it had been recognized from the outset that the structural problems inherent in the agricultural sector must be tackled. Accordingly, the Government had placed subsistence farmers at the centre of all development strategies, had undertaken massive water and soil conservation programmes and had introduced improved agricultural techniques. As a result Ethiopia was now one of the five fastest growing economies in the world.

33. Given its abundant water resources, temperate climate and vast areas of untapped agricultural farmland, there was no reason why Ethiopia should suffer from food insecurity. Provided that it could develop appropriate policies, build strong partnerships and create an enabling environment for private investors, it should be able to achieve the goal of sustainable agricultural development. In that regard his Government had proclaimed itself ready to collaborate with the private sector. While some had expressed concern that private foreign investors could displace local communities, his Government wished to reassure its international partners and non-governmental organizations that it would act responsibly. Only a fraction of the arable land would be made available to investors, the land would not be inhabited and it would be provided to them only with the consent of local communities.

34. While it was true that Governments were ultimately responsible for food security at the country level, they required supplementary support from the international community. His delegation therefore urged the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis to redouble its efforts, through the updated Comprehensive Framework for Action, to better contribute to the twin-track approach in both the short term and the long term and called on its development partners to continue their efforts to fulfil all their commitments, particularly those outlined in the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative.

35. **Ms. Haynes** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that ensuring food security was a multifaceted challenge that required appropriate policy responses and investments at the regional, national and international levels.

36. As a designated net food importing developing country (NFIDC), Trinidad and Tobago was highly vulnerable to external shocks in international agricultural markets. That dependency on food imports was compounded by low food production capacity and the fact that even locally produced food commodities were dependent to a large extent on raw and semi-processed imported inputs.

37. Her Government had begun to address the challenge of food insecurity by collaborating with international and regional agencies such as FAO, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI). It had developed a National Food and Nutrition Security Policy that included a special focus on the involvement of women in agriculture and smallholder farming, was facilitating access to credit through the Agricultural Development Bank and was conducting applied research studies on priority commodities in accordance with the National Agricultural Sector Reform Programme (ASRP).

38. The global food crisis demonstrated action at the international, national and regional levels. Despite many short-term successes the international community had not lived up to its obligations with regard to the issue of global food security. The role of the multilateral system in assisting Member States to focus and coordinate their efforts to achieve food security could not be overestimated. Her Government therefore reiterated its commitment to the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action and the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and called for a successful conclusion of the Doha Round.

39. A key institution in the coordination of the global approach to food security was the Committee on World Food Security, which had been reformed with the aim of creating the most inclusive international and multi-stakeholder platform for cooperation in ensuring food security and nutrition for all. Her country looked forward to the continued implementation of proposals for the Committee's reform, particularly in relation to strengthened linkages between its constituencies at the local, regional and national levels.

40. **Mr. Dabire** (Burkina Faso) noting that his country suffered inter alia from insufficient and uneven rainfall and population pressure, said that, in recent years, farmers had been receiving direct support from the Government in the form of subsidies for agricultural inputs and distribution of improved seeds. The change to a more industrial type of farming and

the promotion of the marketing of agricultural produce, in particular with the establishment of a genuine partnership between agricultural producers and the various processing industries, needed to be advanced. Additionally, measures must be taken to facilitate access between the growing areas and the marketing areas and to improve processing of agricultural products in order to lengthen their shelf life and increase their value added.

41. **Ms. Morizet** (France) said that ensuring food security would require close cooperation by all actors concerned, with the international organizations having an important role to play in the areas of forecasting, analysis and early warning.

42. France welcomed the first two reports of the High-Level Panel of Experts within the Committee on Food Security, dealing with legal issues to do with land ownership and international investment in agriculture, and with price volatility of agricultural and food products. The mandate of the High-Level Task Force must be renewed in the interests of improving coordination and synergies.

43. The signatories to the L'Aquila declaration in 2009 had decided to devote $22 billion, over three years, to the issue of food security. France's commitment amounted to 1,551 million euros. Food security and price volatility were priority themes for the French presidency of the Group of 20 (G-20). Cooperation and coordination between the Group and the agencies of the United Nations system was crucial to the definition of collective and sustainable solutions.

44. The initiatives launched by the G-20 included the establishment of the Agricultural Market Information System and the Rapid Response Forum, a pilot project on emergency humanitarian food reserves, to be undertaken by ECOWAS, and the launching of a platform on tropical agriculture.

45. Food security must remain high on the list of priorities of the United Nations. The General Assembly should take steps at the current session to establish a new global governance of agricultural development, food security and nutrition, in conjunction with the work of the Committee on Food Security and the G-20.

46. **Ms. Aung** (Myanmar), noting that major causes of the global food crisis included price speculation, a surge in biofuel production, climate change, low levels of investment in agriculture, trade distortions and a lack of social safety nets, said that the short-term solution to the problem should include emergency food aid and financial response to the food and nutrition security needs in vulnerable countries. A long-term solution would require a comprehensive approach encompassing all the factors adversely affecting agricultural production.

47. One major lesson learned from the crisis was the need for greater investment in the agriculture sector. Greater financial and technical assistance must be given to developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, to boost agricultural production. The international community should enhance its support for the promotion of integrated and sustainable agriculture as well as for rural development and poverty alleviation in developing countries.

48. Myanmar was concentrating on boosting its agricultural production. With abundant arable land, water and a favourable climate, the country had great potential for expanding agricultural production. The emphasis was on ensuring self-sufficiency in rice, expanding the cultivation of pulses for export and increasing production of cotton and sugar cane. Private entrepreneurs and companies had been encouraged to reclaim fallow lands, virgin lands and wetlands for agricultural production.

49. The international community should use the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to develop a comprehensive approach to global food security. While it was each State's primary responsibility to ensure food security for its people, efficient global action and assistance would play an important role in achieving the Millennium Development Goal objective of halving the number of the world's hungry.

50. **Mr. Loh** (Malaysia) described measures being taken by his Government to ensure food security in the country. He suggested that efforts to boost the agriculture sector must involve the younger generation, and must involve improved management through cost-effective and environmentally friendly technologies.

51. **Mr. Lobry-Boulanger** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) reported that the Federation had focused its 2011 World Disasters Report on hunger and malnutrition. Even when it did not reach famine levels, chronic hunger had a devastating effect: every year, millions of children died

because of a lack of adequate nutritious food, with millions more suffering stunted growth.

52. To address the problem it would be necessary to improve agricultural practices and marketing mechanisms. In addition, more global action was needed to tackle related issues, such as poverty and inequality, population pressure, climate change and land degradation and desertification. Urgent action was also needed to stem the continuing rise in food prices caused by commodity speculation and rising fuel prices.

53. At the same time, more could be done to empower people to identify their development priorities and diversify livelihood options. Smallholder farming provided one solution for struggling pastoralist communities and should be expanded. By means of "sustainable intensification", in the sense of scaling up innovations that increased productivity without destroying the resource base on which it depended, Governments and donors alike should promote the participation of local farmers and acknowledge their wisdom and experience. More than half of those suffering hunger were women, many of them small-scale farmers themselves. According to recent research productivity on farms would increase by 20 to 30 per cent if gender discrimination were to be eliminated.

54. Disaster risk reduction measures were an essential element of communities' resilience. In responding to heightened emergencies, donors must be encouraged to look at investing to prevent the next disaster, through supporting enhanced planning and accountability, investments in infrastructure improvements, and in social services.

55. **Ms. Ratsifandrihamanana** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) observed that high and volatile food prices were likely to continue due, inter alia, to growing demand for biofuels, dwindling natural resources, deteriorating soil quality and high dependence on fossil energy sources, pesticides and fertilizers. To achieve food security targets, agricultural production would have to increase by 70 per cent globally and by 100 per cent in developing countries. That would require increased investment in agriculture, including innovative financing and initiatives that targeted smallholder farmers.

56. It was time for a new paradigm that would incorporate the agriculture, forestry, fishery and food sectors in a sustainable manner. To achieve that new paradigm, FAO had developed the concept of "greening the economy with agriculture", which referred to increasing food security while using fewer natural resources, by way of improved efficiencies throughout the food value chain. It was hoped that the "greening" approach would contribute to the policies and decisions that would emerge from the 2012 Conference on Sustainable Development. All dimensions of food security must be addressed, in a comprehensive and multisectoral engagement that also incorporated cross-cutting issues such as gender equity. Central to that approach was the role of smallholders, especially women, who should be seen as critical agents of change in agriculture and food security.

57. Finally, she called on Member States to support the decision of the FAO Conference to establish the International Year of Quinoa in 2013 and the International Year of Family Farming in 2014.

58. **Mr. Medrano** (World Food Programme (WFP)) observed that three years after the onset of the food and financial crises, food prices were still historically high. Under these circumstances, investment in social protection was critical in order to avert disasters. Nutrition safety nets — such as school meals — sustained livelihoods and prevented those affected from adopting negative coping strategies. For example, despite indescribable hardship all around them, 4.5 million people in Ethiopia, Kenya and northern Uganda who had had safety nets in place had not needed emergency aid, and had not been displaced.

59. Such social protection measures could be complemented by the development of emergency food reserve systems for vulnerable countries or regions. The World Food Programme was developing a pilot project for a regional emergency humanitarian food reserves system, as a complement to other measures for mitigation and improved management of risks associated with food price volatility.

60. Reform of the Committee on World Food Security was resulting in increased collaboration among the Rome-based agencies including through transition from relief to recovery, information systems for food and nutrition security, and partnership on weather index insurance tools. The key factor was to concentrate on solutions that worked.

61. **Ms. von Lilien** (International Fund for Agricultural Development) observed that the

international community seemed to be falling behind in its efforts to achieve the goal of reducing hunger and poverty. That was due, at least in part, to nearly three decades of declining support for agriculture. Since the food price crisis, however, there had been renewed commitment to agriculture by donor countries and international financial institutions, as well as increased funding from emerging economies and domestic resource mobilization in developing countries.

62. While those were promising signs, the challenges remained enormous. Some 70 per cent of the world's poorest people lived in the rural areas of developing countries. By improving their ability to feed themselves, they could also improve their ability to feed others, generate income, and create new jobs. However, to become more productive, they needed access to productive resources, finance, technology and support in managing the many risks they faced. Organization was key: through stronger producer organizations, poor rural people could act as partners in development. Agriculture must be a viable and rewarding lifestyle for those who chose it. The forthcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development would offer opportunities to recognize smallholder farmers as the strategic entry points for action on global food security and poverty reduction and place the men and women who grew the world's food at the centre of an inclusive, equitable and sustainable development framework of the future. The time to act is now.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.